The Flipped Classroom

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For many years, schools have been set up the same way. The students come to class and listen to the teacher present their material. Then, the students go home, and complete homework that reinforces what the teacher lectured about during school that day. Then, they are eventually asked to complete an assessment on the content that was taught. A flipped classroom is a challenge to that model. It drastically changes the role of the teacher and the student. Instead of students coming to school to listen to their teacher lecture about the content, they watch the lecture at home. Then, they come to school with the background necessary to complete activities (what used to be homework) that are based on the lecture video. Many digital natives embrace this approach. However, the digital immigrants, that are often teaching the natives, have to commit to learning the necessary technological tools to provide their students with this online instruction. The digital immigrants also have to be willing to take on certain challenges to assure that this approach can be successful with their students.

**What Does A Flipped Classroom Look Like?**

According to [Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flip_teaching), “Flip teaching is a format of education which reverses the role of homework and classroom teaching.” Teachers devote time to recording videos that are posted online which give the students the necessary background knowledge of a subject. The students then have the responsibility to watch those videos on their own time at home. Class time is then devoted to completing collaborative assignments with the teacher as a guide. If a teacher notices a group of students having difficulty, they can also serve as a tutor of that small group. With this approach, the teacher is available when the students are applying the skill being taught instead of during a lecture. To me, there are many benefits of this approach.

Every student I have ever taught has walked into my classroom with different needs than the other. In order to be successful, I often find it is my job to find the approach that suits that student the best. Flipped classrooms really allow the teacher to individualize the instruction based on need. Certain programs such as [Khan Academy](http://www.khanacademy.org/), put in the hands of teachers tools that help drive their classroom instruction or tutorials. I have used Khan Academy and am amazed at the data it is able to give to a teacher about where a student is with a certain skill and how they have progressed to that point. Khan Academy is equally valuable to the student. It keeps track of the videos that student has watched as well as the “badges” they have earned. Then a student is able to log on and pick up where they last left off. While reading the article, [“Flipping the Classroom,”](http://www.economist.com/node/21529062) Ms. Cadwell, a teacher in a flipped classroom that uses Khan Academy, remarked, “Instead of having to guess where my students have gaps, I can see it, at that moment, and I walk over to that one student.” The instantaneous data that is at the teacher’s fingertips can be addressed immediately. Teachers usually have to take homework assignments home, grade them, and then refer back the questions later (if time allows). This immediate feedback takes the question of “Who is not getting it?” out.

**What are the drawbacks? What support would I need in place to flip my classroom?**

In order for me to envision the transformation of my classroom into a flipped classroom, I would need certain support. I strongly feel that while flipped classrooms have many benefits, there are certain things that need to be in place for them to be taken seriously for students and parents.

Unfortunately, not every program is as intuitive as Khan Academy. For example, [Math Live](http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/me5l/html/Math5.html) is an excellent resource that has cartoon episodes available for students to watch and complete online activities as they go. I often refer to these episodes with my SMART Board during class or come up with an accompanying packet for the students to complete at home along with the episode. However, Math Live does not track progress. There is no way of knowing who has viewed the episodes or how they have done on the questions (unless each is printed out). While a resource like this still has its benefits, I do not know that the classroom instruction would be as individualized using these episodes. I know if I took on this approach, I would make my own videos as well, but just as in Math Live, I would want a way to know who has viewed the videos and how they did with certain questions.

Another challenge for me to flip my classroom would be with technology resources. There are schools that provide students with laptops, or iPads, or other tools. When a district does not provide those resources, I do feel that some parents especially (digital immigrants) would question a teacher that requires a student to use a certain device. I also worry that more excuses would be made for students to not watch online tutorials because of the lack of a specific resource. I think if a school district wanted to encourage teachers to flip their classrooms, it would be necessary for them to provide one of the tools for them to complete the online work. Using Khan Academy in a classroom with one computer is still valuable, but it does not allow a teacher to individualize instruction to every student. If a district does not provide certain technological resources, it is also likely that the students will require more background knowledge about information literacy and even something as simple as Internet safety before being expected to go online to view material that gets posted.

**Can this approach effectively achieve the balance for digital natives and digital immigrants to be successful in the classroom?**

Although I do have reservations about this approach, I feel that it has the ability to be the most successful in secondary classrooms. By the time a student reaches middle and high school, they have an idea about how they learn best. Since the students (the digital natives) are viewing the videos made by the teachers (the digital immigrants), it is important for the teacher to reach the student in some way. I completely agree with the statement from the article, [“3 Keys to a Flipped Classroom,”](http://connectedprincipals.com/archives/3367) that said, “ Producing a boring, uninteresting or bland lesson that you expect a student to watch at home, with a few hundred more distractions than a typical classroom…well, that seems pretty counterproductive to me.” If we want the digital natives in our classrooms to respect us and complete certain tasks outside the classroom, it is the responsibility of the digital immigrants to deliver lessons that their students value.

**References**

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